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POTATOES--WHITE OR SWEET

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Vegetables, like people, can live down their early reputations. This is proved by no less an example than our commonplace but dependable aid to economy, the potato, the common "spud" of the army kitchen, which appears on the American table more often than any other vegetable. Potatoes are enjoyed democratically by all ranks and levels. They are served in the most expensive hotels, the cheapest lunch rooms, the wealthiest and the poorest homes. About four bushels a year per person is said to be the quantity the average American eats.

Cultivation, skillful cookery, abundant potato crops and low prices have brought this staple commodity to its present popularity. And science backs up the popular taste, putting both white or "Irish" potatoes and sweetpotatoes high in the list for nutritive value. Although it has a similar history and food value, the sweetpotato has no botanical relationship to the Irish potato. It is native to tropical America, and is said to have been discovered by Columbus himself.

In food value, says the Bureau of Home Economics of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, the difference between the two kinds of potatoes is chiefly the much greater sugar content of the sweetpotato, which contains also more starch. Each contains vitamins B, and C, but the sweetpotato has more than the Irish potato and is rich also in vitamin A. Both retain, when baked or boiled in their skins, more of their vitamin content than do most other vegetables, and both furnish some food iron and other minerals. So baking, boiling, or steaming are recommended as the best cooking methods to retain the most food value.

When it comes to table uses, the Irish potato and the sweetpotato have a different range of possibilities. For Irish potatoes, the range covers soups, main vegetable dishes, and salads; sweetpotatoes are usually considered suitable only for main vegetable dishes and desserts.

After baked, boiled, or steamed potatoes, the good cook thinks of mashed, fried, creamed or scalloped potatoes, potatoes au gratin, potatoes on the half shell, hashed brown, O'Brien, or Lyonnaise potatoes. Fried potatoes, of course, may be the old-fashioned sliced raw potatoes fried in shallow fat, or they may be Saratoga chips, French fried potatoes in thick strips, in balls, curls, latticed form, or shoe-string strips, according to the way they are cut. All these are fried in deep fat.

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